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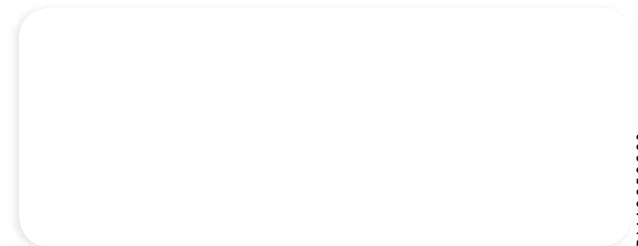
Sept/Oct 2006

how does your centre
measure up?



Plus

- The multilingual market
- Virgin Mobile takes fun seriously





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CSR = custodian of successful relationships

Customer service representatives have a greater potential to make or ruin a customer relationship than a company's CEO. That message delivered by Jim Barnes in his address at the third annual Ottawa Region Contact Centre Association (ORCCA) Career Excellence Awards Gala deserves echoing here.

Through Barnes Marketing Associates Inc. based in St. John's, NL, Barnes researches, consults and speaks on customer relationship building and creating customer loyalty. He finds that there has been more change in the last five years in how customers interact than in the last 40 years. The biggest change is that mass media is no longer mass. "How do companies reach people? They don't. It has become more push and less pull. Business is initiated by the customer. For 10 to 20 years, communication was customer controlled. Now the customer drives it."

The problem is that marketing has not kept up. "The customer is way ahead." He claimed that 80 percent of car buyers go to a car sales person saying 'here's what I want and what I will pay.' Similarly, patients are self-diagnosing and self-prescribing.

Marketing has to change to recognize that "the pendulum is with the customer. It is the customer who decides what communication is going to occur."

Marketing as something we do to people to sell more stuff is an obsolete notion that needs to be replaced with marketing as pulling rather than pushing, he stressed. "Customers are not comfortable at being 'sold at.' They are the marketing experts and tell us what works. They don't like being pressured – yet, businesses compensate people on the basis of commission."

Barnes contends that the traditional sales focus doesn't work anymore since customers can talk to companies with 1-800 numbers and Web sites.

What all this means, he said, is that "there is tremendous opportunity to make an amazing impression on the customer. Things seemingly insignificant are important. Customers pick up on little things. You have to display caring and other emotive responses over the phone."

Avoid viewing customers as a data point rather than a person, he counselled. Think of the context. Why is the customer calling? How does the customer feel when she/he hangs up the phone? It's hard to measure. Pleased? Relieved? Delighted? Surprised? Disgusted? Angry? Let down? Mortified?

Every call you take is an opportunity to impress. Agents are "custodians of the relationship. The customer relationship ball is in your court," Barnes stressed.

Susan Maclean, Editor



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coming events: 2006

October 2-6

Customer Service Week supported by The Customer Service Group, ICSA and HDI. www.csweek.com

October 4-5

Seventh annual Contact Atlantic Conference and Annual General Meeting of ContactNB; Delta Brunswick Hotel; Saint John, NB. (506)789-9292; www.contactnb.ca

October 15-18

SOCAP International's (Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals in Business) 2006 Annual Conference; Westin Harbour Castle Hotel; Toronto. (703) 519-3700; www.socap.org.

October 17

GTACC meeting (originally set for Sept 20th), 8-10 a.m.; 161 Bay Street, Suite 4040; Elizabeth Winter (CPA) will be speaking on Absenteeism in the Workplace; Lilly Krstic (Telus - Subject Matter Expert) will

be speaking on Contingency Planning in the Workplace. Contact: Sangeeta Bhatnagar; 416-596-3434 ext. 234; sbhatnagar@spherion.ca

October 18

8:00-10:30 a.m.; HDI Ottawa; Char LaBounty - Working With Support Teams Beyond the Service Desk; Élisabeth Bruyère Health Centre; 43 Bruyère St.; Ottawa. (613) 860-3330; www.hdiottawa.com

October 19

11:30a.m.-1:30p.m.; HDI Toronto Chapter's Annual Kick-off Event; Char LaBounty - Working With Support Teams Beyond the Service Desk; INTERCONTINENTAL - Toronto Centre (225 Front Street); 416-352-1792; www.helpdesktoronto.org

October 23-25

ICCM Canada; Metro Toronto Convention Centre; Toronto. www.iccm.com

November 7-8

The Contact Center World Awards Best Of The Best world finals; Las Vegas, NV. www.contactcenterworld.com/worldawards.

November 14-15

BC Contact Centre Association Annual Conference and Tradeshow & Awards of Excellence Gala, River Rock Casino Resort Richmond, BC; 1-877-323-0307; 604-602-5833; www.bccallcentre.com.

November 14-17

CAM-X 42nd Annual Convention and Trade Show; Cancun, Mexico; 1.800.896.1054; www.camx.ca.

2007

April 25-27

The first Contact Centre Global Forum for senior contact centre decision makers across the globe; Palais des Congrès, Cannes, France; www.ccglobalforum.com.

...SECTOR COUNCIL TRACKS INDUSTRY PROGRESS...

Contact Centre Canada (CCC), the industry's federally funded sector council, is a source of information on a variety of topics.

Do Not Call Legislation

If you are interested in the workforce implications of the Do Not Call legislation, you will want to download CCC's report on *Labour Market Implications of Offshoring, Regulatory Changes and New Technologies*. This 200-page report available at no charge provides a comprehensive examination of these three critical industry issues and will be useful for strategic business planning. As part of the analysis, the report examines the impact of the changing value of the Canadian dollar, the importance of access to the US market and provides a good overview of the status of Home Agents as part of the discussion on New Technologies.

Compensation White Paper

CCC has commissioned a white paper from Mercer Human Resource Consulting, a global human resources firm with a specialized knowledge of the contact centre industry. Available at no charge, the paper provides a detailed look at compensation for customer service representatives at the entry, intermediate and senior levels. Base salaries, salary ranges and year over year growth are among the many variables examined in the white paper. The paper includes a discussion of wages for select functions – e.g., inbound with selling vs credit/collections and enterprise-wide variables such as attrition rates and percentage of organizations offering language and shift premiums. To access this free report, become a CCC member (no charge) at www.contactcentrecanada.ca

Datamonitor Site License

CCC has negotiated a site license for all Datamonitor reports related to Contact Centres. The most recent report is entitled: *Selling Canada as a Nearshore option*. To access this report and other reports, please see www.contactcentrecanada.ca.

Sector Technology Road Map

With funding from Industry Canada and in partnership with the National Research

Council as well as vendors and consultants to the industry, CCC is creating a Technology Road Map for the industry. Technology Road Maps predict the technologies and corresponding human resource skills that will be imperative to address mid-term (three-five years) market needs. The kick-off meeting was held March 28. If you are interested in the proceedings please contact Kyle Janota, manager, Communications & Research (kyle@contactcentrecanada.ca).

Elizabeth Thorn retires

In other news, CCC is searching for a new executive director & CEO to replace Elizabeth Thorn who retired at the end of July. "Elizabeth led a number of important initiatives for the Council", said Chairman Doug Downing. "We will miss her vision, drive, passion and ability to get things done. We wish her the best as she begins this next phase of her life."

Thorn expressed her appreciation for all of the industry support she received. "I thoroughly enjoyed my tenure with Contact Centre Canada, and enjoyed very much working with all of the Council's stakeholders", she said. "The support for the contact centre industry is tremendous. This industry is truly a significant force in Canada."

New directors on board

The CCC board of directors is comprised of representatives from the contact centre industry, including labour, educational institutions, industry suppliers and vendors. They are:

- *Doug Downing (chair), VP, Customer Service, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), North Vancouver, BC;*
- *Paulette Baudry-Klug, (vice-chair), Burlington, ON;*
- *Michael Hayes (secretary), SVP, Electronic Banking Contact Centres, Bank of Nova Scotia, Scarborough, ON;*
- *Darlene Berscht (past-chair), client solutions dir, Telus, Calgary, AB;*
- *Jeannie Baldwin, regl exec VP, Atlantic Region, Public Service Alliance Canada (PSAC), Halifax, NS;*
- *Afshan Bye, SVP, Sales & Services, Switch-Gear Consulting, Toronto, ON;*
- *Sandra Freeman, pres, Freeman International, Nepean, ON;*
- *Pierre Marc Jasmin, pres, Services Triad Inc., Montreal, PQ;*

- *Fidelma Lynch, professor & academic coordinator, Contact Centre Program, Centennial College, Toronto, ON;*
- *Tom Brauser, VP, sales, Intrawest Central, Reservations, A Division of Intrawest Corporation, North Vancouver, BC;*
- **Marieke Pilon, MBNA Canada, SVP Customer Ops Exec, Ottawa, ON;*
- *Ross Beattie, pres & CEO, Online Support Inc. Dartmouth, NS;*
- **Scott Williams, Assoc VP, Customer Relationship Contact Centre, Canadian Tire Financial Services, Welland, ON;*
- **Daniel Milot, VP, Customer Contact Centre, Rogers Communications Inc., St-Laurent, QC;*
- **Debby Vincent, contact centre manager, Staples Contracts, Lower Sackville, NS;*
- **Nancy Tichbon, head, Customer Experience, Virgin Mobile Canada, Toronto, ON;*
- **Jorge Garcia-Orgales, labour representative, United Steelworkers, Toronto, ON.*

*Members sworn in at Junes AGM. **CM**

...SMT DIRECT SELECTS ALTITUDE UCI SOFTWARE...

Toronto-based SMT Direct Marketing Inc. (www.smtdirect.com), and its parent company, InfoSpan Pakistan, a provider of multi-media contact centre outsourcing services, has selected Altitude uCI (Unified Customer Interaction) software for its CRM solution. The selection was based on the software's customer interaction management solutions for customer service; help desks; collections; order desks; outbound telemarketing, sales and service; and business process management – "all modules that our customers are now asking for in an integrated call centre solution," said SMT Direct president and CEO Tony Nadra. **CM**

...FOSTER PARENTS PLAN ADOPTS IBM SYSTEM...

This organization has selected an IP call centre telephony system from IBM to reduce costs and improve reaction time to donors responding to crises. With the new system, Foster Parents Plan of Canada expects to be able to quickly, easily and economically customize its system—including recordings, agent scripts and on-hold music and messages—to prompt donations in response to a major disaster in a developing country. **CM**



...THE SHOPPING CHANNEL
EARNS GOLD...

...IS CANADA LOSING ITS COMPETITIVE
CONTACT CENTRE OUTSOURCING EDGE?..

The Shopping Channel, a Rogers Communications Inc. company, has achieved the CCEOC Institute's Contact Center Employer of Choice (CCEOC) designation for their Mississauga-based customer contact centre.

The Shopping Channel is the first retailer to certify as a CCEOC. It achieved gold on its first assessment. The Shopping Channel participated in the Contact Center Employer of Choice program to enhance its reputation, develop exceptional work environments, and improve its ability to attract, retain and engage high performing employees. Its dedication to developing a CCEOC workplace and focus on the employees has had a profound affect on employee satisfaction, reports CCEOC.

"The Shopping Channel Customer Care Centre culture can be summed up in one word: 'fun'" said Jeff Doran, CCEOC Institute president. "Their people focused values resonate throughout the organization and have had a significant affect on improving satisfaction, and developing a safe, healthy, enthusiastic work environment."

"As a management team, we've worked hard to develop an employer of choice culture," commented Graham Kingma, The Shopping Channel's vice-president, Customer Service. "Employees deserve a great deal of credit for providing ideas for improvement and showing a positive attitude everyday."

The Contact Center Employer of Choice award recognizes and brands people-centric contact centres. Through a proprietary, three-phased assessment, a contact centre can quickly determine if they meet the qualification standards.

With 600+ dedicated employees, The Shopping Channel, Canada's only nationally televised shopping service and leading electronic commerce player has been called Canada's most innovative and diversified retailer and distributor. Since the initial launch of The Shopping Channel in 1987, it has become a multi-channel retailer and distributor through its online presence at www.theshoppingchannel.com (launched in 1999) and its full service turn-key Direct Response Television (DRTV) and national retail distribution/wholesale division, The Shopping Channel Direct.

Previous projections indicated US investment into Canadian contact centres would remain aggressive. What went wrong?
BY PETER RYAN

Over the past two decades, Canada has established itself as the location of choice for US-based high value customer care. This should come as no surprise. When examined critically, Canada has more in common with the US than any other country. Canadians and Americans watch the same television programs, share the same products, use the same services and visit each other's country frequently.

To be clear, Datamonitor expects that the absolute volume of outsourced agent positions in Canada will rise over the coming five years, growing from 29,000 to 35,000. However, where the concern lies is the pace of this growth, which is scheduled to fall through this period to a nearly negligible rate of three percent by 2010.

Especially in the past two years a few factors have led to a noted slowdown:

- The decline of the US\$: No greater factor has influenced the fall in outsourcing growth into Canada from the US and the drop in the Greenback. What was once a huge differential between the CDN\$ and US\$ has all but evaporated and with it has gone the automatic cost savings that American investors had long coveted. Should recent parity projections hold true, this will only serve to ensure more divestment from Canada on the part of US outsourcers.
- Saturation within Canada: Since the uptake of contact centre outsourcing in Canada, a number of locations have become highly sought after by American investors, including the Maritime provinces, the greater Toronto, Ottawa,

Montreal and Vancouver regions. However, with demand being omnipresent in each of these locations for so long, the result has been to push up both agent wages and property costs, further eroding Canada's competitive edge.

- Lack of Spanish: US companies are increasingly starting to see the necessity to provide customer services in Spanish as well as English. This is due in part to the rapid growth in the American Hispanic population, both in sheer numbers and household income. Unfortunately, in Canada, it is relative difficult to source such labour in large numbers in any one location and to do so would come at considerable cost. When considering that markets such as Mexico can provide such services, many US companies are considering whether to look south of the border as opposed to its traditional northern direction.

However, all is not lost for outsourcing in Canada and Datamonitor has the following recommendations for investors interested in this market.

- ✓ Target the highest-end US customer care: Using this strategy, investors would situate only the most valuable customer service to the American market in Canada, as opposed to more administrative and mid-level work which could be better served from a cost basis in locations such as India, the Philippines or Egypt.
- ✓ Use smaller urban centres in Canada: While larger cities are seeing escalating prices for contact centre labour and facilities, Canada has abundant smaller centres that can provide excellent customer care at reasonable costs. In many of these cities, incentives are readily available as well.
- ✓ Attack the domestic Canadian market: Canada's economy is growing rapidly, and with that comes increased consumer spending. Outsourcers need to work to provide services to this expanding demographic. **CM**

The CCEOC Institute is an experienced team of contact centre experts, academics and analysts who oversee Contact Center Employer of Choice Certification and Development program for regional, national and international contact centres. CCEOC also works with corporate clients to advance their people focused cultures and help build high-morale, high-performance operations. www.ccemployerofchoice.com; 416-886-7007. **CM**

Datamonitor analyst Peter Ryan can be reached at pryan@datamonitor.com or 514-680-1898.

...TRANSWORKS OF INDIA ACQUIRES MINACS... BY RON GLEN

One of Canada's largest and most successful call centre service bureaus, Minacs Worldwide Inc., was acquired on August 18, 2006, by a subsidiary of TransWorks Information Services Ltd of India which offered \$5.50 per share in cash for all outstanding common shares of Minacs.

The Toronto-based Minacs provides customized business process outsourcing (BPO) offerings in three core areas: contact centre operations, integrated marketing services and back office administration. It has about 6,000 employees in locations in Canada, the U.S. and Europe, and has secured clients in the automotive, financial services, telecom, technology, and government sectors.

Like Minacs, TransWorks is a provider of premium BPO solutions and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Aditya Birla Group, a large and respected business enterprise in India.

Founded in 1999, TransWorks currently employs more than 4,200 employees in facilities in India and Canada. It serves Global 1000 financial services, technology,

retail and eservices companies.

Together, Minacs and TransWorks are estimated to create a business drawing revenues in excess of \$330 million. Of that amount, Minacs will furnish about \$290 million with TransWorks contributing the remainder.

Company founder and principal shareholder Elaine Minacs died of cancer in late May at the age of 61. She started the company as a temporary staffing agency in 1981 and, after several successful years, made a strategic decision to re-direct the business into the burgeoning customer relationship management (CRM) services industry. She served as CEO until last November.

There will be no change to the Minacs name, or any of its operations, Allyson Caskie, senior manager, corporate communications for Minacs, told *CM* and *DMN*. Business continuity and achieving a seamless transition for clients and employees is the number one priority, she says. Trans Works values the Minacs brand, culture and people and the preservation of this quality was critical to the bid. **CM**

...TD ENGAGES BELL CANADA TO IMPLEMENT CISCO IP..

Toronto-Dominion Bank Financial Group (TDBFG) has a seven-year contract engaging Bell Canada to implement a fully outsourced IP-based contact centre solution for the Bank. Bell Canada will work with its partners IBM Canada and Cisco Systems Canada to implement the solution and migrate TD's contact centre technology to an IP-based platform. As TD's single point of contact, Bell Canada will be responsible for converting the Bank's entire Contact Centre infrastructure including: IVR, call routing, switching, call recording, work force management and reporting capabilities. The Solution supports 94 locations and over 6,300 agents. IBM will help lead the transition from TD's current platform to the new IP-based system, as well as develop and support ongoing call recording and performance reporting capabilities. Cisco will provide the core IP contact centre technology including: IP Voice Gateways, Customer Voice Portal, Cisco Unified CallManager and IP phones. **CM**

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Measure your way to customer focus

BY DR. DAVE SCHRADER

Here's how putting the right customer-focused measures of success in place could help you dramatically improve your marketing productivity.

A customer care centre can potentially be a big generator of customer satisfaction and loyalty – if backed by quick access to analytical intelligence and shrewd marketing forethought. The fusion of customer marketing with customer support presents new opportunities for care centre managers to contribute significantly to corporate scorecards, not just in traditional customer support areas, but also in sales and as bell-weather inputs for shifts in customer behaviours and attitudes.

From a channel mix perspective, this makes the Canadian call centre an important part of any company's resource, cost and benefit structure. You can quickly gauge the maturity of management's view of the call centre by asking what they measure. At the most basic level, scoreboards measure information about *calls*, e.g.:

- Percentage of calls by initial status: answered, on hold, not answered, dropped
- Percentage of calls by inquiry type
- Average call duration and hold time
- Calls by origin, by hour, by origination time period
- Number of transfers

Many traditional customer care centres also measure information about *agents*:

- Average duration time per call, by agent
- Agent utilization over time
- Pick up time
- Cost per call (eGain White Paper “*Doing more with less*” from Giga Group shows a cost of \$25 per phone call and \$40 for every call escalated to Level 2).

While both sets of metrics are good examples of a corporate focus on operational excellence and efficiency, they do not necessarily deal with what is most important: the impact of the call centre on *customers*.

Moving to this level requires three important mental shifts:

1. Constructing customer-centric metrics
2. Designing customer-centric experiences or dialogues
3. Testing both the metrics and the experiences

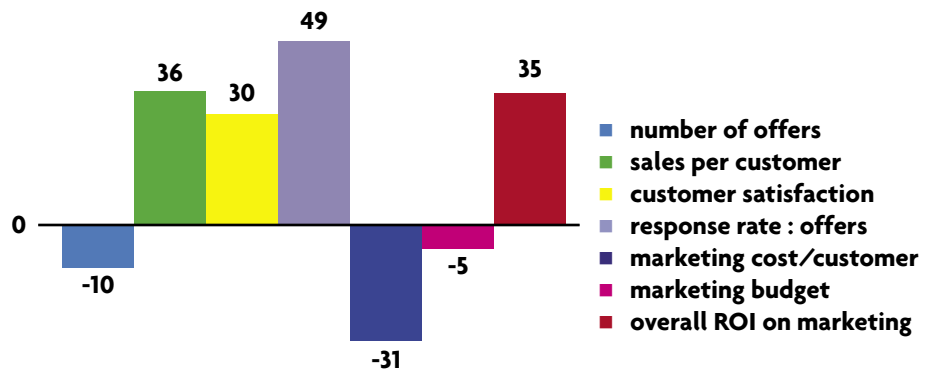
1. CUSTOMER-CENTRIC METRICS – might include statistics that measure, from a consumer perspective, whether the call centre:

- “Was a good use of my time.”
- “Solved my problem; answered my question.”
- “Makes me want to interact with this company again.”

In reacting to these questions, the customer will be evaluating your company overall, not just the interaction with the call centre. Therefore it is important to develop holistic customer metrics that span channels, and to plan to continuously collect and analyze overall customer opinions.

Here’s an example of holistic metrics (customer-centric metrics that treat the call centre as just one channel of many used to interact with the customer) that highlight what you should be able to do with a good marketing game plan.

HOLISTIC CUSTOMER KPIs (% improvement)



2. DESIGNING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES – is still an art form. Instead of being an isolated in- and outbound channel to customers, your call centre should view itself as one of several channels, all of which can be carefully orchestrated to maximize the customer experience, seamlessly across all channels. The corporate-wide goal should be to build systems that are highly responsive, highly relevant and highly profitable for the customers and the company to use. Or in Customer Relationship Management speak: the interactions should include the right dialogue at the right time to the right customers over any combination of channels.

Have you mapped out the dialogues you want to have with your customers when they choose to contact you? Do those dialogues support your company’s strategic initiatives?

One Teradata customer in the financial services sector reports that about 85 percent of the time, contact (in any form, through any channel) is initiated by customers, as opposed to the bank contacting them. What’s more, The McKinsey Quarterly “Using Call Centers to Boost Revenue” in May 1, 2006, a recent study of North American banks, finds that successful efforts to cross-sell during inbound service calls can boost a retail bank’s sales of new products by 10 percent. There is tremendous opportunity to improve busi-

ness and customer service, if you are ready and know how to respond.

Sadly, many companies are not capitalizing on the potential of mapping customer dialogues. And if they have done so, it has been in isolation, not factoring in that customers have other options like the Web, to interact with your company. While many interactions with a business can be automatically satisfied over the Web, not many companies have planned for cross-channel synchronization.

- Can your customer care centre pick up a dialogue where it left off on the Web site?
- Does your Web site have the ability to pick up where a conversation with a care centre agent left off?
- Does your care centre take advantage of the knowledge of customer interactions on all other channels?
- Do both your Web site and your call centre have the same insights and guidance as to the next five best product or service offers for each individual customer?

Supporting this integrated customer view is not difficult with the right technology. There are trends in the technology world toward real-time, active data warehousing and real-time analytics. In the past, data warehouses handled mostly strategic applications, which did not require instant response time, direct customer interaction or tight

integration with operational systems. But today's information is used increasingly 'in the moment' to drive real-time customer interactions over care centre channels, the Web and the telephone. It is an opportunity to widen the discussion with the customer, to gather additional information and fold in insight from your market research and competitive intelligence functions.

For example, suppose Malcolm (a customer) calls a Canadian wireless company's customer service centre complaining about his dropped calls. Through the call centre application, the CSR can access specific details about all of Malcolm's interactions with the company—regardless of product line or sales channel—along with his customer profitability score which is stored in an active data warehouse.

The agent might also be aware of new marketing efforts by competitors who are targeting people like Malcolm, as well as the top five typical questions customers might ask when comparing plans.

The CSR thereby knows much more about Malcolm's relationship and history with the company, and how much contact he has had with the company over the past year or for that matter, over the past few days. Based upon this information, the CSR can now provide the appropriate information to Malcolm to resolve his phone service issue to his satisfaction. Additionally, the CSR will have the insight to cross-sell or up-sell a new calling plan based on the details in Malcolm's profile and company interaction information.

Because the agent has all of the detailed data on this customer's precise calling patterns, a tailored plan for Malcolm should always be able to meet the competitive offers he might be considering. Finally, if Malcolm mentions seeing ads or offers from competitors, the agent can not only make note of it in the customer record, but also pass along to the marketing department this valuable information and the specific aspects of the offer that are attracting Malcolm's interest.

3. TESTING METRICS AND CUSTOMER DIALOGUES – is the final part of the equation. Consider another customer, Ma-

relationship. To do this, you will need to determine when and how to interject key messages into the conversation or gather information that can turn off marketing campaigns.

Do you really know what is worth measuring and which dialogues are the most effective? You could if you captured that information in a data warehouse. By analyzing dialogue impacts by customer segment, you can quickly spot trends. The care centre, with its wonderful human touch, can be a great channel for gauging reactions to offers, and a smart marketing department can use the CSR inputs to record, test and fine-tune dialogues

You can quickly gauge the maturity of management's view of the call centre by asking what they measure.

rie-Claire. When calling your bank, Marie-Claire undoubtedly has the relationship with your company on her mind. Let's say Marie-Claire has a high balance in her non-interest bearing account. This might be a good opportunity for your CSR to suggest alternative investment vehicles. During the interaction, the agent may discover that Marie-Claire wants to withdraw virtually all of her money to help her niece with a mortgage. The CSR could use this dialogue to highlight various loans options and suggest that Marie-Claire might want to co-sign a mortgage. The benefits are two-fold: Marie-Claire's money would remain with your bank and her niece would become a new customer.

Because Marie-Claire is thinking about your bank when she calls, this gives you the opportunity to gracefully grow that

over time. Using Six Sigma approaches to process improvement, the dialogues can be enhanced by pruning those that do not work, and increasing the use and refining those that do work.

By better focusing on the right customer metrics, you can create a true customer-centric interaction strategy, complete with synchronized cross-channel dialogues that include relevant and timely product and service messages. Case studies on Teradata.com show response rates of up to 40 to 60 percent for finely-tuned banking offers. Using customer-focused metrics can drive more business and improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. **CM**

Dr. Dave Schrader is director of Strategy & Marketing for Teradata, a division of NCR.



Determining what and when to measure

Tracking, evaluating and coaching to numbers has positive impacts on your bottom line as well as your ability to deliver legendary customer experiences. Just don't measure too much and only measure what counts. BY CONNIE SMITH

The three main reasons for tracking metrics or numbers in a contact centre are to:

- increase sales – Measuring and analyzing what customers are currently buying is the first step to increasing sales. Sales per transaction is a great way to find out what's selling, what's not and who has great sales techniques that can be emulated.

- decrease operating costs – With staffing accounting for approximately 75 percent of all contact centre expenses, it makes good money sense to be as efficient and effective as possible. Numbers that most impact operating costs include schedule adherence, talk time, wrap time, telephone service level and hold time.

- increase customer satisfaction and loyalty – One performance metric that helps is First Call Resolution. Other metrics include average speed of answer, hold time, abandoned rates and customer experience criteria such as active listening, empathy and tone which can be evaluated through quality monitoring scores.

Most of the industry combines workforce management, telephone, quality monitoring and CRM numbers to get a holistic performance view of their workforce and centres. The key is to find the balance between efficiency and effectiveness which is not easy but, when accomplished, your centre will make the transition from a cost centre to a profit centre.

The most widely used performance numbers for agents include:

Schedule Adherence – how closely the representative followed his/her work schedule including start time, finish time, break, lunch and available phone states.

Talk Time – the average time a representative spends on the phone with each customer.

Wrap Time – the average time a representative spends on the interaction after the customer hangs up and not available to take another interaction.

Average Call Capability – the average number of calls a representative could take in one hour. This is based on adding up their talk time and wrap time then dividing it by 60 minutes.

Quality Assurance – quality assurance is recording and evaluating customer interactions based on pre-determined skills such as product knowledge, technical ability, showing empathy, good listening skills, sales abilities and following regulatory or compliance guidelines.

First Call Resolution – resolving the customer request on the first call without

having to escalate or call back the customer for resolution.

Average sale per transaction – the average sale that takes place during a customer transaction.

How do you know if you are measuring the right things? Start by identifying your company and department goals. Then ask yourself which of the performance metrics (numbers) you are currently tracking could measure the success of the goal. Then, ask yourself what quality skills could be evaluated and coached to help drive the goals. All contact centre performance numbers should be tied to one or more department or company goals. **cm**

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Metrics at the individual level

Leveraging human process management – accounting for and integrating individuals – can be a road map to increased efficiency and profits.

BY ANN HAMANN

The old adage that time is money certainly rings true when it comes to meeting service level agreements (SLAs). Many contact centres have turned to Business Process Management (BPM) to streamline processes and help them meet these agreements. However, BPM falls short in one key area: the ability to account for and integrate the role of each individual in contact centre processes. A new generation of BPM technology has emerged—Human Process Management (HPM)—that effectively leverages the human role in business processes, enabling contact centres to optimize their people as well as their processes.

While overall group metrics are important, the real information can be found when you drill down to the individual level.

By using HPM, contact centres can more effectively manage their staff to meet or exceed SLAs. Following are some specific ways to leverage HPM for maximum business benefit:

- Drill down to the individual level – Individuals are an integral part of complex, high-cost, service-oriented business processes, yet much of the current technology tends

to evaluate them as a group. While overall group metrics are important, the real information can be found when you drill down to the individual level. That's where you can find additional capacity, the need for help, availability, etc.

- Consider individual skill sets – Identify which skill sets, body of knowledge and expertise each of your employees has. Then you can assign the best person to handle specific types of calls and determine how you might re-allocate assignments based on workload and your performance against SLAs.
- Determine true availability – While workers may look like they're available on paper, what is their true availability? Look at each individual's schedule and be aware of his or her availability on an hour-by-hour basis. Look at individuals outside of your team to assess potential availability that may be needed if there is an overflow of work or you are falling short in meeting SLA requirements.
- Evaluate key information in real time – Ensure you have a process and technology in place to evaluate your employees' workload and progress in real time. Using a metrics dashboard, you will be able to track the productivity, progress and resources of the individuals working on a task. Measure your performance against SLAs you have established with clients. This allows you

to see early warning signs of problems, and be able to mitigate risk and address issues before it becomes too late.

- Act upon the information – Use these metrics to proactively plan, measure and adjust workloads and staff assignments to meet or exceed SLAs. When you are falling short, determine the skill sets you require and match those up with available resources.
- Make decisions based on the business benefit – Based on SLA penalties or rewards, decide when it makes sense to pull resources off of one assignment to move another one ahead. Be prepared to adjust workloads on the fly based on real-time analytics to reap the largest incentives and avoid the greatest penalties.

Operational efficiency has become tightly linked to results and financial rewards. By being able to evaluate and leverage individual workloads and performance in real time, you will be able to measure your success against your SLAs and make adjustments as needed. The end result: your contact centre will benefit from increased efficiency and a better bottom line. **cm**

Ann Hamann is vice-president of Marketing at PeopleCube, the Waltham, Mass.-based provider of on-demand Human Process Management solutions – the next generation of Business Process Management. 781-530-2600 or ahamann@peoplecube.com.

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Strategies to manage attendance

BY DAVID KEATING

Once you've determined how much it costs when employees are absent (see The ROI of managing attendance, March/April Contact Management), you still need a strategy for improvement. Managing attendance is a challenging and often frustrating exercise as 100 percent attendance is seldom realistic, especially in larger centres. There are times when it's tempting to consider those special workstations. You know, the ones that have the manacles attached.

One of the very first things that we have to do is to let go of the mindset that goes something like "people these days just don't want to work". Well of course they don't! I don't either! But since my lottery tickets never seem to have the right numbers on them, I don't think that's happening anytime soon.

There are lots of things that motivate people to come to work. The reasons are as varied and personal as the people who handle our phone, email and chat queues. That seems obvious. Yet one of the reasons that many attendance programs and incentives fail to deliver the desired results is that we make assumptions about those motivations. Then we set up programs that address the motivations of only a few of our people, hoping that we're reaching the majority.

Studies of contact centre attendance issues are very clear that "high involvement" strategies produce measurable results in reduced absenteeism – as much as a four percent average improvement. A high involvement strategy is based on the idea that the people we manage are the ones in the best position to know why they aren't coming to work.

High involvement strategies can be implemented on both an individual and centre-wide basis. Individual strategies generally focus on the interaction be-

tween the supervisor and the employee, involving other departments or management as needed.

In this article we'll look at just one type of high involvement strategy at the contact centre level. This model is most applicable to centres with more than 100 seats, but it can certainly be adapted for smaller operations.

If you have been in this industry for any length of time, you have probably experienced the attendance committee, or its sibling, the scheduling committee. Both can be important tools in managing a centre, but only if their mandate is clear to everyone.

So the first step in setting up our high involvement attendance committee is to determine what we expect it to accomplish.

A) Reduce absenteeism – It may sound silly, but it's surprising how many attendance committees lose sight of their core purpose. Set hard goals. Target numbers measured in hours, shifts or bodies in seats. Only resort to percentage improvements if scheduling fluctuates significantly over short periods. Announcing that "Five more people showed up to work today!!" is more powerful than "Attendance improved by 0.98 percent."

B) Evaluate incentives – Even the members of the committee don't know the motivations of everyone they work with. Don't expect them to. It's unfair and it's self-defeating. The committee should act as a clearing house for ideas submitted by all employees.

C) Manage incentives – Once an incentive is chosen, the committee is in charge of its management. Set targets, determine performance and decide when to conclude a particular program. This is where the rubber meets the road in determining the success of your attendance committee.

D) Communicate – The attendance committee needs to be front and centre of any communication regarding incentives, particularly in the case of successful programs. This not only demonstrates that employees are involved in the success of the centre, it also helps to motivate the members of the committee to continue to be proactive.

In order to achieve these goals, the committee needs to be provided with a clear and realistic budget. This can be determined with the ROI strategies previously discussed. Management must make a commitment to support the committee within this budget and to provide a process for review so that the committee can make realistic plans.

Finally, the makeup of the committee is critical. Where possible, agents should make up the majority of the committee, or at least be equally represented to management. Qualification for membership must be clear and include maintenance of key metrics. The process for replacing members whose metrics fall must be established during or prior to the first committee meeting. And adhered to. Management representation on the committee should include both human resources and workforce management. These members act as resources to ensure that proposed programs meet both labour law requirements and business needs.

With a clear mandate and proper representation, an attendance committee can become the model for other high involvement strategies that not only get your people to work, but leverage their experience and expertise. And that is a pretty good ROI. **cm**

David Keating's consulting focuses on attendance and attrition issues. www.keatingconsultingandtraining.com or 613-849-5084

Multilingual centres profit from quality and consolidation

Contact centres with multilingual support can offer improved customer satisfaction, reduce operating costs and increase their share of the market. Canada's known this for years.

BY PETER RYAN

Within the contact centre outsourcing sector, there is an ongoing move to provide multinational clients with customer care in a variety of languages from one centralized location. In the past, many outsourcers had been content with providing service to callers from several facility locations, but due to ongoing cost rationalization, this attitude has changed. Now, those vendors that are to be successful are likely those that will be able to house multiple languages from a small number of facilities.

There is no doubt that the primary driver for consolidation of contact centre facilities is cost. Players within the contact centre outsourcing industry are making every effort to reduce overhead expenses as much as possible. In fact, very few vendors are taking the antiquated route of opening individual facilities to deal with one or two languages. Rather, in the emerging model, multiple languages are serviced from one single facility, thereby reducing overhead costs and improving efficiency.

Many contact centres are also leverag-

ing multilingual agents to service customers from various markets as well. This is nothing new for Canadian outsourcers who have used agents with talents in both French and English. These centres have historically been located in New Brunswick, as well as Montreal, Ottawa and Eastern Ontario, all of which have significant penetrations of bilingual labour.

A similar trend has been evident for years in many EMEA locations, where fluency in several languages is common. In particular, Central Europe has emerged as a location of choice for multilingual contact centre work, due to historically high levels of spoken German as well as a renewed emphasis on English, French, Italian and Spanish. Another example is Egyptian contact centre outsourcer, Xceed, which regularly services end-users from both

see **Multilingual centres** page 15 ↗



Providing service with the customers' own words

In a rapidly flattening world where communication technology is increasingly facilitating a global market, multilingual abilities are becoming essential skills.

Sangeeta Bhatnagar, professional search and placement consultant in the Toronto office of staffing company Spherion Corporation, reports that in recruiting for call centres, "there is an increased number of centres asking for additional languages. French, Spanish, Cantonese and Mandarin are the most common."

She finds there is a difference between in-house corporate centres and third party call centres. "The corporate centres tend to focus in French, Spanish and then Cantonese/Mandarin as required. The third party call centres tend to look for additional languages such as German, Spanish, Korean, Cantonese/Mandarin and Parisian French as they service many

global companies.

"For Canada to be a location to outsource business, the additional language services must be offered," she adds. "The diversity within the GTA's talent pool serves as a great feature when attracting business. Even if certain languages are not "officially" offered, there are usually CSR's available to meet the language requirements. As the demographics continue to change, there will be an increased number of centres offering additional languages to meet the needs of the customers."

"At the executive level, we're seeing requests for language skills other than English or French," reports Wayne Percy, senior partner at Toronto-based Derhak Ireland Executive Search. He finds that for many clients, it's not a policy but they are very willing to interview candidates with any Indian language skills. He cites

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

one marketing and research client that is trying to build what would amount to a United Nations of staff in the project management area so they don't have to go outside the firm for translation services when doing international work.

He suggests that a marketing and research company doing the same survey in 20 countries would need 15 languages. He recalls that before the research firm Goldfarb was acquired by Millward Brown International, the company had more than 40 native languages on one floor because of its international projects.

"If you're not exchanging currency or value, there are no borders now, especially with Voice over IP technology," he says.

SMT Direct Marketing Inc. boasts that its Canadian headquarters located in the heart

see **Providing service** page 15 ↗

North America and Western Europe in a multitude of languages, thereby affording clients of wide-ranging customer care in one central facility.

This same phenomenon is now occurring in the US and is due to the emphasis that has been placed on the ever-growing American Hispanic demographic, which is expanding in both sheer population size and purchasing power. Many US-based outsourcers are now emphasizing the recruitment of agents fluent in both Spanish and English so as to reduce the total number of agents on staff, thereby increasing profit margins, while at the same time maintaining operations on shore as opposed to locating facilities overseas.

The countries that are likely to be hardest hit by the trend to multilingual consolidated contact centres are those that have traditionally concentrated on single language support. Potential casualties include India and the Philippines which have focused nearly exclusively on English service. While this may not affect business from the UK, Australia/New Zealand, unless India can provide large numbers of Spanish speakers, US firms may decide to keep facilities at home, or move into Latin America.

North African locations including Morocco and Tunisia that base their value proposition on French are also vulnerable, should they not offer investors agents that have multilingual capacity.

In conclusion, contact centre investors are becoming increasingly discerning in site selection, taking into account not only economic/political stability, location and infrastructure. Now, the ability to minimize costs through agent efficiency is paramount, and is unlikely to change as a priority in the near to medium term. Proactive investors will recognize this and work to deliver customer care solutions that take into account overhead cost containment, so as to grow their businesses. However, those that do not, risk getting left behind not only from the standpoint of agent pricing, but the ability to do business in the global marketplace. **CM**

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Languages of service

Number of call centres in that city offering service in that language, with % of the city's call centres that number represents

	Toronto	GTA	Lower Mainland	Montreal
French	36 (84%)	63 (78%)	19 (46%)	6 (100%)
Cantonese	8 (19%)	11 (14%)	8 (20%)	0
Mandarin	9 (21%)	12 (15%)	8 (20%)	0
Spanish	5 (12%)	12 (15%)	10 (24%)	1 (17%)
German	5 (12%)	6 (7%)	5 (12%)	0
Other	4 (9%)	7 (9%)	9 (22%)	0
N	43	81	41	6

This chart is from Contact Centre Canada's Report on Call Centre Features in Toronto, the GTA, the Lower Mainland of BC and Montreal, prepared in March by Ann C. Frost, associate professor at the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business, and assistant professor Danielle D. van Jaarsveld and doctoral student David Walker, both at the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business. The full report, which examines the nature of the call centre population in each of the three major urban centres in Canada, is available in the member section (membership is free) of www.contactcentrecanada.ca

of the world's most diverse city, Toronto, provides contact centre solutions in multiple languages including English, French, Spanish, Greek, Korean, Chinese Mandarin, Cantonese, Italian and Portuguese.

When the provider of multimedia contact centre outsourcing services opened a new contact centre in Montreal this past June, SMT Direct president and CEO Tony

outbound voice campaigns can be executed fast and cost-effectively while keeping the message dynamic and current.

"Whether it's a billing issue, an address change, signing up customers on new products, a question or an adjustment to their service level, it is important that we strive to resolve any customer inquiry in the language of their choice," Nadra says.

"It is important that we strive to resolve any customer inquiry in the language of their choice."

Nadra explained "to better serve French-speaking Canada and several of our major clients, it was necessary to invest in a new centre in Laval, a suburb of Montreal. Some organizations don't realize their most loyal and valuable customers call for service and support at odd hours and expect to be served in the language of their choice. With our new French-language centre, we are giving our clients' customers choice and service in real-time."

With operations in North America, Pakistan, India, Dubai and Latin America, SMT offers its customers near-shore, on-shore and off-shore services so inbound and

"We act as an extension of our client's brand to manage the everyday needs of the people who use their products and services, and most importantly make sure their interaction is positive.

"Good customer service should be available and consistent around the clock in this fast-paced, global economy," he adds. "It behooves companies to make strategic investments in personnel to empower them to meet the demands of customers. It will pay dividends in customer retention and loyalty as well as a company's brand's reputation." **CM**

Virgin Mobile takes fun seriously

Nancy Tichbon, Virgin Mobile Canada's Queen B, aka head of customer care, can relate to the company's youthful agents and target customers.

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

Making work fun is part of a business strategy that is working for this successful contact centre in the competitive telecommunications field.

Members of a group touring the Toronto-based Virgin Mobile Canada customer care centre arranged by The Contact Professionals Alliance (www.cpacan.com) early this year knew at a glance that this is not your usual corporation, let alone contact centre. The lobby in bold red and white includes a long counter and what appears to be bar stools along one side. From here, tour members were escorted through glass doors into a boardroom with windows shaped like

those on an aircraft.

If the visuals don't give it away that this is not a stuffy, boring corporate environment and clearly aims to appeal to the 18 to 34 years old demographic target for Virgin Mobile, the corporate titles will. Our hosts were "Queen B" Nancy Tichbon, who reports directly to the president of Virgin Mobile Canada, Andrew Black, and "Chief Call Girl" Maria Ferranti.

Fun, innovation, quality, value for money, customer service and customer cham-

ption are the measures for every quarter in which the company awards employees' alignment to these values. The chief call girl or operations manager Ferranti won overall for the company demonstrating the company's respect for customer service and earning her a reward of a private dinner with Virgin Group founder and CEO Richard Branson last April.

"If people are happy and motivated, the customer gets a great experience," said Tichbon, head of customer care. She

“If people are happy and motivated, the customer gets a great experience.”—Tichbon

claimed that Virgin Mobile puts their own people first, the customers second and the stakeholders third. “Engaged employees can drive great customer service and at the same time save you money.”

Not surprisingly, Virgin Mobile doesn't have rigid rules such as CSRs must say yes instead of yeah. When reviewing quality, no one is counting how many times an agent says the customer's name in full.

Virgin Mobile has no scripts and encourages agents to offer a relaxed, human, friendly yet professional approach. Tichbon has an obviously favourite example of how confining a script can be. When she called a credit card company to change her name when she got married, the agent was efficient and did her job to the letter – but failed to show that human connection by neglecting to offer Tichbon best wishes as a newlywed. As a result, a perfect opportunity to build customer loyalty passed by.

As an example of providing great customer service, she recounted a Virgin Mobile agent's conversation with a caller who requested that she not have to listen to the 'on hold' music. When the agent warned her that there would be several minutes of dead air, the agent offered instead to sing. And followed this up by asking the customer 'what would you like me to sing?' Never mind that the singing left much to be desired, the agent made an impression on the customer, Tichbon enthused. “You can't teach that.”

Maybe you can't teach it, but you can encourage it and hire the people most likely to provide that level of service – and Virgin Mobile has a crafty way to do that. Ferranti explained that eight or nine new prospects are brought in for a group exercise. While the interview process occurs at an individual level, Tichbon mingles with the waiting prospects and casually gets to know them. As she typically dresses in comfortable low-rise jeans and a casual top, she could pass as a new hire or even another young applicant for a contact centre job at Virgin Mobile. So, it is less than obvious that she is the head of the contact centre.

“We can teach what to say on the phone, but you have to know how to treat people,” Ferranti says of their recruits and prospects. “We look for passion in their eyes and fire in their belly. A contact centre background is not a requirement.”

Current agents' experience includes tooth-paste modelling and hairdressing.

Tichbon has also made it a point to know their agents' drives and motivations. They are primarily members of Generations X and Y so they can best relate to the youthful target customers. Generation X, she reported, are those born from baby boomers. They seek personal job satisfaction and want a good time at work. They embrace risk and will change a job to look for better benefits. They are creative thinkers and expect employers to listen. They hate inflexibility, respect based on position or title, lack of personal acknowledgement, lack of access to decision-makers and a slow decision-making process. They typically spend more time surfing than watching TV.

Knowing what motivates your agents means you can help motivate them with an appropriate work environment. For example, with the average age of Virgin Mobile agents at age 25, there has to be Internet access in the lunchroom.

Tichbon cited a Gallop poll that revealed that leadership, fairness, employee appreciation and recognition are the top three drivers of employee satisfaction. “Team leaders are the most important,” she said. “They can destroy everything if they are not doing their job right.”

Being a telecommunications company, calls fall into five types of varying durations, ranging from activation to troubleshooting. Tichbon stressed that handling times and service levels are more interesting to the competition than to anyone else. “Your customer need should be your benchmark.”

Ferranti says trying to catch staff members doing something right has built “a



The lively Virgin Mobile Canada team at Contact Centre World Awards Best of America's event last March includes Queen B Nancy Tichbon, second from right.

fantastic internal culture” and “a great environment to work in. Rather than build policies and bad actions, we manage the exception so we don't ruin it for everyone else.”

The Virgin Mobile contact centre in Toronto launched March 2005 after just six months of start-up time.

The operational infrastructure includes Peoplesoft CRM, a knowledge tool, forecasting and scheduling tool, self-service, voice recording, IVR and PBX.

Shift hours vary but the centre runs from 9:00am to 9:00pm local time Monday to Saturday and 10:00am to 7:00pm on Saturdays.

An X-box is available in an Ikea furnished chill-out room with an island getaway theme. There are awards every month for outstanding performance. The recipient gets his/her picture on the wall and more money in the next cheque.

The numbers show the centre to be successful. Tichbon said that statistics bear out that “customers who call Virgin contact centres have a higher propensity to be satisfied than those who had not called. We've turned a negative into a positive. It's a good reminder that we're not just a cost centre.”

The centre earned a J.D. Power customer service award, scoring 200 points above the average competitor scores.

Perhaps the greatest challenge and secret to success is keeping it up, Tichbon added with a smirk at the sexual connotation. The “magic” is doing certain things not for just a couple of months and then dropping off but continuing on to make it a standard practice. **cm**

VoIP

offers benefits but still not well understood



Photo: Amanda Rohde

Executives from BCE Elix, Nortel, Genesys and Mitel share their views on the impact of VoIP on contact centres.

BY SUSAN MACLEAN

The ability to work anywhere due to VoIP is changing the way we do business as dramatically as the revolution from typewriter to PC, according to Franco Clauser, senior contact centre specialist, BCE Elix. In his presentation at the Voice On the Net Canada 2006 conference in Toronto recently, he reported that more customers looking at VoIP view it now as an enabler to network branch offices or disparate switches across the country in order to reduce costs and be more self-sufficient from their telco. Even so, he noted that "Everyone is talking about it, but few understand it."

Clauser claimed that IP telephony has received a bad name from companies just trying it over existing infrastructure. In fact, Clauser stressed that "the underlying network infrastructure is the single most critical factor in determining the overall success of an IP telephony deployment."

The network is "definitely the determining factor in overall voice quality, performance and end-user satisfaction." He added that this is true regardless of network or telephony vendor. "Poor infrastructure leads to poor results – the network HAS to be able to support it."

Provided a network is IP telephony ready, Clauser said VoIP gives contact centres:

- the flexibility and scalability to grow quickly,
- access to new applications like branding with logos on phones, broadcast messages, and productivity enhancements such as greater mobility without

reduced availability,

- enhanced functionality such as distributed contact centres, coordinated dialling plan and distributed centres. Such functionality is seamless to users.

Facilitating customer service

Customer contact is changing as agents are anywhere, customers are everywhere and communication devices abound, stressed fellow Voice on the Net panellist George Despinic, senior manager, Nortel. In reviewing the extent the contact centre affects a corporate image, he cited the following Benchmark Research findings:

- 92 percent of consumers form an opinion about a company's image through their interaction with the contact centre, and
- 62 percent would stop using a company's goods or services if they had a bad experience.

He suggested technology can help improve the customer experience, citing the example of a customer wanting to refinance a mortgage, phoning a centre and reaching an agent who must then access a subject matter expert. Even though agents need real-time access to such experts to resolve customer issues, those experts could be located anywhere and not necessarily within earshot of the agent. If agents don't know which experts are available to help them at any particular time, agents may be put on hold, reach voicemail, or have to send an email to the expert. As a result, the agent gets frustrated and wastes valuable

time looking for an answer and, worse, the customer is not happy.

If a VoIP application such as Nortel's Expert Service is in place, Despinic said agents can collaborate with experts in real-time which results in: increased first call resolution, increased customer satisfaction, minimized agent frustration, agents can learn on the job and their productivity is maximized. With this Nortel application, when a customer calls in to refinance a mortgage, the agent checks his/her "experts list" to find available mortgage experts. The agent contacts the expert via voice, IM or video for immediate response to the customer query. The agent can also conference the expert in to respond to the customer directly.

Acceptable quality

The IP telephony signaling protocol SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) "will drive the greatest flexibility in a contact centre," said Robert Winder, vice-president, Business Development for Genesys. SIP makes everything accessible across the IP network, not just to a small island.

He reported that Skype Technologies, S.A., the provider of the free Internet phone service Skype, claims it has 250 million downloads with more than four million users active anytime. "It has changed the world of IP communication and will have a serious impact in contact centres."

He pointed out that considering the popularity of cell phones with their poor voice quality and no guarantee of continued reception during a call, IP telephony's quality is good enough and the technology has reached the maturity where it can



CANADIAN CALL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (CAM-X)

REPORT BY LINDA OSIP

CAMX in Cancun: See, Sea, Si!

CAM-X is going way south of the border: by hosting its 42nd Annual Convention and Trade Show in Cancun, Mexico, Nov.14-17, 2006. For the first time ever, there will be outdoor evening cocktail reception, as part of CAM-X's Award of Excellence program! This year's agenda includes a session on the area's history. There will be scheduled free time for you to sightsee, relax by the pool or catch a siesta. So bring your beachwear and prepare for fabulous friends, fun in the sun and jam-packed sessions!

"CAM-X meetings seem to energize all participants," says Gary Pudles of The AnswerNet Network. "The people, the education and the networking events have me always coming away with new ideas and new friends."



As part of the CAM-X 42nd Annual Convention & Trade Show, we will be holding our third annual Silent Auction, with all proceeds going to the Canadian Breast

Cancer Foundation. The gala also includes 'Shave to Save' feature, where CAM-X members volunteer to shave their heads to raise funds for cancer research. Since it is our 42nd Annual Convention, we plan to raise \$42,000 dollars, about 20 percent more than last year! Help us reach our goal by donating goods, services, novelty items, dinners, vacation packages, etc; be creative! To donate an item or service, please email camxauction@camx.ca.

Linda Osip, Exec Dir, can be reached at 800.896.1054; linda@camx.ca; www.camx.ca

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Whether you join HDI as an individual or provide your entire support organization with the benefits of HDI membership, HDI offers several levels of membership to match your individual needs and budget as well as those of your organization.

Tech watch - cont'd from page 18

be adopted.

"Customers have gone from asking for complete security and quality of service to 'what else can I do with it?' That means it is now good enough."

Planning is key

When deploying the IP contact centre, careful planning is required to ensure end-user expectations will be met, cautioned panellist Todd Simons, VP, Business Development, Mitel. He suggested that an "intelligent evolution" strategy protects your legacy investment while evolving into full-fledged end-to-end contact centre solution. He advised looking for vendors that have deployed many IP telephony so-

lutions successfully and have experience in contact centre environments. "Ask for references! A well-planned and implemented IP contact centre will address critical issues such as quality of service, system security, feature requirements and applications integration.

"Preparation is the key to avoid added costs and project overruns," he stressed. "Include site preparation, emergency backup procedures and organizational realignment."

Simons said that 95 percent of the new contact centre systems Mitel ships are IP. "The question is not 'if' the contact centre will move to IP telephony but rather 'how' will they do it?" **CM**



CONTACTNB

REPORT BY ANGELA JM MATCHIM

Compensation survey & other activities

This summer ContactNB released the findings of the 2006 Compensation Practices survey which captured provincial data on compensation rates as well as benefits, hours of work, shift/bilingual premium practices and more. The survey is offered annually as a complimentary benefit of membership and is open only to members of ContactNB.

June 8 marked the 2nd Annual ContactNB Awards of Excellence. The gala evening, which featured comedian Tony Quinn as Master of Ceremonies and entertainer, was attended by over 250 people. Over 45 trophies were given out in the categories of member of the year, community involvement, workplace environment and more.

June 12th marked the first full-day Best Practices session in Bathurst, New Brunswick, in recognition of the growing customer contact centre community in the northern part of the province. Two of our more popular topics, floor policies and attendance management were discussed at length as participants openly shared their best (and worst) practices in these areas.

Two more sessions remain for the current year's calendar, one in September on Quality Coaching and a dual stream (agents and managers) on Motivating in conjunction with our Contact Atlantic Conference October 4-5, 2006.



The seventh annual Contact Atlantic Conference is being held October 4-5, 2006 at the Delta Brunswick Hotel in Saint John, NB. The theme of this year's event is The Power of One – also the topic of the opening Keynote Breakfast, featuring the co-founder of the Call Center School, Penny Reynolds (also author of the book The Power of One). The conference will again feature two full days of sessions for managers as well as agents on topics

such as leadership, sleep and shift work, managing stress, leading effective change, employee conflict resolution and home agent solutions. Our closing keynote luncheon will feature Kenny "The Monk" Murray with his talk "Developing Leaders to Rebuild Employee Passion." For details, please click on the "Contact Atlantic" headset logo at www.contactnb.ca.

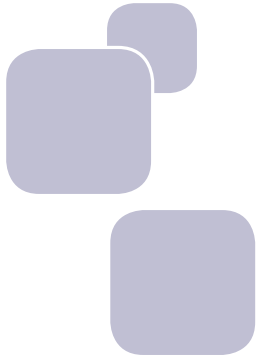
October 4 will also mark the seventh Annual General Meeting of ContactNB and the election of the 2006-2007 Board of Directors and executive committee.

For more information on any aspect of ContactNB's activities, code of ethics, events or priorities, please feel free to contact our provincial office at (506)789-9292, info@contactnb.ca or www.contactnb.ca.



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**BC CONTACT CENTRE ASSOCIATION
Annual awards gala,
conference, trade show**

The BC CCA is proud to recognize our industry and invited nominations to the BC CCA's 2006 Awards of Excellence program in one or all of the following four categories:

- Contact Centre of the Year
 - Contact Centre Employee of the Year
 - Vendor of the Year
 - (First Time!) Community Spirit Award
- Deadline for submissions was September 30, 2006.

The Awards of Excellence Gala & Conference & Trade Show is set for November 14-15, 2006 at River Rock Casino, Richmond, BC.

Details at www.bccallcentre.com or call 1-877-323-0307 or 604-602-5833.



Manitoba Customer
Contact Association

**MANITOBA CUSTOMER
CONTACT ASSOCIATION**

REPORT BY LILIANNE DONATO

Growing resource centre

MCCA's resource centre is growing and now has its own space in our new office location. Stop by the MCCA office at 619 Erin Street in Winnipeg and browse through the materials we have gathered. Numerous titles are available in hardcopy, video, DVD and CD format. Check out the following resources that will no doubt be helpful and of interest. If there's something you don't see, let us know. We'll do our best to get it!

- Winning with the Caller from Hell (A Survival Guide for Doing Business on the Telephone)
 - Call Center Leadership & Business Management Handbook and Study Guide
 - Contact Centres in Canada – the Competitive Landscape for Pay
 - Industry Job Postings (May'06 to Date)
 - Industry Periodicals
- ...and a lot more. Call, email or visit us in person for more details.

Joint employment partnership

The MCCA's joint initiative with Red River College and MTS Allstream is proud to announce the graduation on Sept. 1, 2006. As part of the Aboriginal Workforce Strategy, at press time 11 Aboriginal students prepared for graduation and employment as customer service representatives with MTS Allstream.

Twenty-one contact centre agents and support associates were honoured at the third annual ORCCA Career Excellence Awards Gala. The event in Ottawa on May 17, 2006, celebrated exceptional talent in the national capital region's contact centres.

Earlier in the year, ORCCA members had been invited to nominate outstanding agents and/or support associates. These

nominees were subsequently ranked in the categories of customer service, teamwork, efficiency and attendance according to a scoring tool developed by the consulting firm AtFocus Inc. At the gala, the top scorers were awarded plaques after being introduced by their nominators as having reached a silver or gold level score. For ex-

cont'd on page 22 ↗

Learning opportunities with MCCA

Certificate in Interdisciplinary Studies (CIS): Contact Centre Management Program is a joint program of the University of Manitoba Continuing Education Division and MCCA. MCCA will prepare students to work as supervisors and entry level managers in Canada's rapidly developing contact centre industry, which employs more than 10,500 people in Manitoba.

University of Manitoba program required courses are Supervisory Management I and Supervisory Management II, plus one of the following: Canadian Business: An Introduction; Managerial Communication; or Managing the Human Resource Function.

MCCA program required courses are Customer Relationship Management and Operations, plus one or two of the following: Contact Centre Management; Customer Contact Centre Technology; Facilitating Successful Meetings; Financial Management; Managing a Sales Environment; and/or the Canadian Customer Contact Centre Landscape.

Want to find out more? Contact MCCA's training coordinator, Lynn Riddell at lynnriddell@mcca.mb.ca or 975-6465. Check out the Training and Development Calendar on our Website at www.mcca.mb.ca


MCCA celebrated its new home with an Open House on Thursday, September 13th, from 2:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. The new home is at 619 Erin Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3G 2W1. (204) 975-6464; www.mcca.mb.ca.



OTTAWA REGIONAL CONTACT CENTRE ASSOCIATION

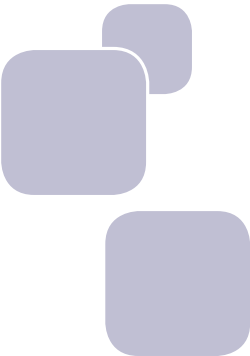
REPORT BY SUSAN MACLEAN

ORCCA honours outstanding performances



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CHANGE MANAGEMENT As times change and workplaces follow suit, how can you help workers adjust? *Contact Management* offers useful tips for dealing with change. We'll also cover managing older workers and tips on transitioning from technical expert to manager.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY We'll look at the year behind/the year ahead, highlighting the hot topics and upcoming challenges.

Plus we'll cover the latest in HUMAN RESOURCES — Hiring, training, retention, wages and benefits, motivating, conflict management; TECHNOLOGY — Software, hardware and networks; OPERATIONS — Bench-marking, strategic planning, meeting management and organizational structure; FACILITIES — Location, design, furniture, security, health and safety.

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ample, ING Direct manager Catarina Bruno described Romuald Hivert in terms of ingredients in a recipe for a successful contact centre staff member: determination for success, desire for results, abundant team spirit and above and beyond customer service. In fact, the introductions revealed a fascinating list of the qualities that made the individuals outstanding.

The 2006 Award of Excellence recipients are: Jean Francois Flores and Ernestina Olaru with Sun Life Canada; Marc Mousette and Romuald Hivert from ING DIRECT; Danielle Montgomery and Swati Goyal (gold) at MBNA Canada; Eric Clavet with City of Ottawa; Colleen Armstrong and Gilberte Taveres at EDS Canada; Daryl Fowlie, Nicholas Hakamaki (gold), Meredith Burwood, Mohamed Yusuf and Nalini Chitrapu from Convergys; Shannon Seabrook, Marie-Josée Lord (gold), Lisa Brais and Daisy Flores at Assurant Solutions; Brian Thompson with On Path Business Solutions; and Edward Martchenkov and Sarah Drummond (gold) from Sitel.

ORCCA chair Sandra Freeman was also awarded a distinguished service award as a volunteer of the contact centre community and this organization which notches 10 years in 2007.

The evening began with remarks by Dr. Jim Barnes, marketing expert and author of *Secrets of Customer Relationship Management: It's All About How You Make Them Feel*. He encouraged attendees to recognize their "tremendous opportunity to make an amazing impression on the customer." (See From the Editor, page 4 for more insights.)

Richard Moore with Assurant was an entertaining Master of Ceremonies with comedic help from Don Cormier with AtFocus. The efforts of fellow ORCCA directors Larry White at Algonquin College, Kelly Daize with OCRI, Brian Handrigan at Telnet, Ann Koppel with Convergys, and Julie Bazinet also ensured the evening's success.

The event's sponsors included AtFocus, Bell, BCE Elix, Circumference, Contact Centre Canada, OCRI, Randstad Work Solutions, Rogers, Smart Telecom and Telnet Networks. CM



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